



**Opening Statement of Rep. Aaron Bean (R-FL), Chairman
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education
Hearing: “Academic Freedom Under Attack: Loosening the CCP’s Grip on
America’s Classrooms”
September 19, 2023**

(As prepared for delivery)

Welcome to today’s hearing entitled “Academic Freedom Under Attack: Loosening the CCP’s Grip on America’s Classrooms.”

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) influence is rampant in American classrooms. Over 500 K-12 schools across the United States have allowed the CCP to establish itself in their halls under the guise of Confucius Classrooms. But when you pull back the curtain on these “cultural exchange centers,” you find a CCP-backed agenda that undermines the principles upon which our educational system is built.

The risk posed by the proliferation of Confucius Classrooms is threefold, threatening America’s national, geopolitical, and academic interests.

One of the most alarming threats is to our national security. A recent report revealed that numerous Confucius Classrooms are strategically located around U.S. military bases. Moreover, it uncovered that elite American secondary schools, like Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, are partnered with Chinese military schools “supervised” by the Chinese defense industry, like Tsinghua University, to develop academic programming.

These ties raise serious concerns about the safety and security of military children and secrets. The CCP's presence near our bases can be seen as a direct attempt to target and influence these vulnerable populations, potentially compromising our national security in the process.

Furthermore, Confucius Classrooms pose a significant geopolitical risk. They are explicitly organized by the CCP Politburo to project soft power on American students. This strategy is straight out of the Soviet playbook. In 1960, the USSR established the People's Friendship University as a cultural and literary exchange program to indoctrinate students in developing countries like Africa, Asia, and Latin America, with notable alumni including Marxist revolutionaries and world leaders.

This blatant attempt to inject foreign ideologies into our schools undermines the fundamental purpose of American education. It goes without saying, we should be teaching American values in American schools.

Which leads to my third point. Confucius Classrooms risk our academic security. Every dollar that flows into American classrooms from the CCP comes with strings attached, and the most important string is the requirement that instructors censor themselves to appease Beijing. It would be remarkable to ever hear four words in a Confucius Classroom: Tibet, Taiwan, and Tiananmen Square.

This censorship stifles academic freedom, which is a cornerstone of our educational system. Academic freedom encourages open dialogue, the free exchange of ideas, and the pursuit of knowledge without fear of reprisal. Confucius Classrooms, however, undermine these principles by fostering an environment where educators are pressured to align with the CCP agenda, stifling critical thinking and true intellectual exploration.

We must recognize that the consequences of this infiltration will harm generations to come. Our children deserve an education that empowers them to think critically, develop their own perspectives, and become informed and engaged citizens. Allowing CCP propaganda to infiltrate our schools robs our children of this opportunity.

The danger of Confucius Classrooms in American K-12 schools cannot be overstated. They threaten our national security, compromise our geopolitical interests, and erode our academic freedom.

Today, the Committee is taking a stand against CCP influence, and we will continue to work tirelessly to safeguard our educational institutions from foreign interference.

It is our duty to protect our children's future and preserve the integrity of American education.

On a final note, the Committee supports teaching Chinese language, history, and culture. China has a rich culture that our students should learn about. We also support the Chinese people, who have been horribly oppressed by their government. What we do not support is CCP indoctrination and the whitewashing of history.